

# *CSU EXTENSION RURAL INITIATIVE*

## **Improved Health: Impact Report**

**FY: 2022-23**



**ENGAGEMENT  
AND EXTENSION  
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

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- 02.** Introduction: Health Extension
- 03.** Healthy Aging Program Impacts
- 08.** Behavioral Health Program Impacts
- 10.** Health Promotion Program Impacts
- 16.** Our Partners
- 17.** Additional Resources

# CSU HEALTH EXTENSION

The Rural Initiative's focus on "Improved Health" has allowed for increased engagement in supporting the health and well-being of rural Coloradans while shedding light on the vast and complex elements involved in promoting healthy communities. With three priority areas guiding our work (Behavioral Health, Healthy Aging, and Health Promotion/Disease Prevention), Health Extension has established direction, momentum, and most importantly, positive impact in the lives of rural Colorado residents. This report highlights key outcomes on account of the Rural Initiative investment in Improved Health during the 2022-2023 fiscal year.



## BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

- Three Colorado AgrAbility Behavioral Health Specialists were hired and deployed in the Eastern, Mountain, and Western Regions.
- An OEE Behavioral Health readiness survey was distributed, and 70 responses were evaluated to drive future strategies.



## HEALTHY AGING

- The Aging Mastery Program was scaled to all four rural regions and has been made available to Spanish-speaking audiences.
- Dementia education for Caregivers was piloted in the Eastern Region after its identification as a community need.



## HEALTH PROMOTION/ PREVENTION

- Three Regional Health Specialists were hired to build partnerships and capacity for health initiatives in the Eastern, Mountain, and Western Regions.
- Program expansion was focused on nutrition education, chronic disease prevention, rural safety education, cooking classes, and food security.

# HEALTHY AGING PROGRAM IMPACTS

## AGING MASTERY PROGRAM

The Aging Mastery Program (AMP) is a fun and engaging education and behavior change incentive program for aging well. AMP is offered nationwide, and more than 20,000 participants have completed the classroom program. However, high cost of AMP implementation is often a barrier for rural communities. With support from the Rural Initiative, AMP was scaled throughout Colorado and implemented in each of the four rural regions:

- Yuma and Logan Counties-Eastern Region
- San Luis Valley and Prowers County-Southern Region
- Ute Mountain Ute Tribal Elders, Montezuma County-Western Region
- Teller County-Mountain Region

AMP is now being offered in six languages, in addition to English: Spanish (Sterling, Fort Collins, and Lamar), Amharic, Tigrinya, West African French, Arabic, and Kiswahili (Aurora).



### Helping Aging Adults Prepare for the Unexpected

*Picture this... A gentleman bringing his chronically ill wife to AMP, helping her find a seat and brushing her hair once they are inside. She laughs and says "he doesn't like it when my hair is a mess." His eyes are weary as the toll of being a caretaker is heavy. Mobility is a struggle for them, yet they come each week. By the end of the program, they report they had planned well but did not plan for a serious health issue and benefited greatly from each week's discussion.*

-Janae Naranjo, San Luis Valley Area Extension Specialist



### Revitalizing Yuma County's Senior Center

*"The Yuma County Senior Center had been shut down due to COVID but a group of community members had gathered to get the center back open and thriving. This center does not have an employed director or any employees and only relies on volunteers. I was able to work with the group to help get them started with program and volunteer services by providing AMP, free of charge. In addition, community feedback on senior meals was lackluster at best, so I decided to provide free lunch twice a week for the five weeks of class; this was crucial in bringing in local attendees and addressed a clear need."*

-Ginger Williams, Extension Eastern Regional Specialist, Improved Health



### Partnership with the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe

*"AMP has built capacity with multiple tribal departments and outside organizations. In addition, the program has brought excitement and greater enthusiasm for a stronger partnership and collaborations between CSU Extension and the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe. Furthermore, the program has engaged an undervalued audience with resources and education to live healthier lives."*

-Greg Felsen, Extension Western Regional Specialist, Accessible Education

# SPANISH LANGUAGE AGING MASTERY PROGRAM

Rural Initiative funds supported the implementation of an Aging Mastery Program for Spanish-speaking audiences in Sterling and Lamar. The success of the Sterling Spanish AMP has led to the development of new partnerships with an interest in co-developing a "certificate-program" focused on healthy aging programs for healthcare employees.



## Helping All Populations Gain Transferable Skills

*"The class was really good. They take the time to explain to us things we don't understand. Like that we don't need to be elderly to get ready for the things to come. But we can get prepared even at my age of 29. It also made me better in my job in that I understand my aging clients more. It helped me know what situations might come up and how I can be there for them, what paperwork I need to help them fill out and what I need to do in the case of an emergency."*

-Glory Hernandez, Spanish Language Aging Mastery Program participant

# ES TIEMPO DE CREAR

Sara Delgado, a participant of the Northeast Regional Engagement Center's (NREC) first Spanish Aging Mastery Program (AMP), became the Eastern Region's first Spanish-speaking Engagement Specialist with support from Rural Initiative and Boettcher Foundation funds. Sara organized *Es Tiempo de Crear*, a weekly discussion/education group with AMP graduates, making NREC a trusted space for Spanish-speakers to find community, connections, support, education, and inspiration.

*Es Tiempo* members partnered with the Rural Initiative Improved Health and Vibrant Communities teams to participate in a Rural Action Project culminating in a *Cinco de Mayo* celebration that drew in over 700 attendees. Potential projects stemming from these interactions include: entrepreneurship training for Spanish speakers, bilingual nutrition programs, bilingual exercise programs in partnership with the Logan County Heritage Center, English/Spanish interpreter training, Folkloric dance classes, community *Loteria* fun nights for families, and more!



# RURAL CAREGIVER WORKSHOP SERIES

CSU Extension partnered with Jane Barton, founder of Cardinal LLC, to share a series of free webinars for rural caregivers of aging family members and friends. The monthly workshop series covered topics including aging solo, age-friendly healthcare, spirituality and health, and THE conversation. Eleven Extension Offices signed up to host watch parties and forty participants joined individually from their homes. Through these workshops, participants were empowered to reframe their aging experience and explore approaches to engage in systems change.

*"I was interested in learning how, as healthcare consumers, we can influence healthcare systems and legislators' decisions for making senior care more accessible."*

-Age-Friendly Healthcare Workshop participant

# OSHER LIFELONG LEARNING VIEWING SESSIONS

Rural Initiative funding helped NREC pilot the first off-campus virtual group viewing of Osher Lifelong Learning (OLLI) programs. This program model allows individuals to come together in-person to experience the class as a group, have discussion, and make connections with others around topics of common interest.

This successful pilot resulted in the development of an OLLI Organizational Membership for Extension, specifically designed to give rural Extension sites around the state the opportunity to host virtual OLLI classes in their communities. Additionally, some participants were inspired to purchase their own OLLI membership so they could join virtually from their home and enjoy the full menu of classes that OLLI has to offer.

**25** 

community residents attended OLLI viewing sessions at NREC.

**100%** 

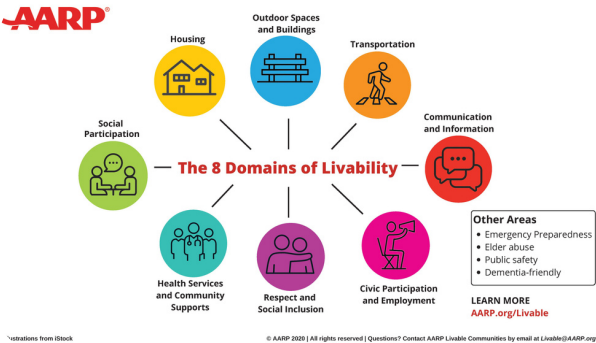
of participants reported they would like additional OLLI programming in the future.

# AGE-FRIENDLY COMMUNITY INITIATIVES

NREC partnered with the Logan County Economic Development Corporation, the Logan County Commissions, and the City of Sterling to become an AARP designated Age-Friendly Community. Rural Initiative funding supported the creation of the Logan County Coalition on Aging (LCCOA) to spearhead age-friendly initiatives. To identify initial directives, based on AARP's 8 Domains of Livability, LCCOA volunteers gathered over 1,000 completed surveys from local residents. The data were used to write Logan County's first Age-Friendly Community Plan.

Sterling Regional MedCenter participated in the Logan County age-friendly planning workshops, which inspired them to apply for their own age-friendly designation. In 2022 Sterling Regional MedCenter became one of three hospitals in Banner Health's western region to be selected as an Age-Friendly Health System by the Institute of Healthcare Improvement.

Inspired by LCCOA, the Logan County Commissioners designated May as Older Americans Month. This spurred a community celebration for older adults called Embracing Aging on the Square, which drew over 250 participants and 40+ vendors!



A \$2500 Colorado Trust grant was secured by the LCCOA to help diversify the audience of the Logan County Heritage Center (senior center) by adding signage in Spanish, a Spanish language exercise class, and a monthly family fun gathering at the center to draw more Latinx families into the center.

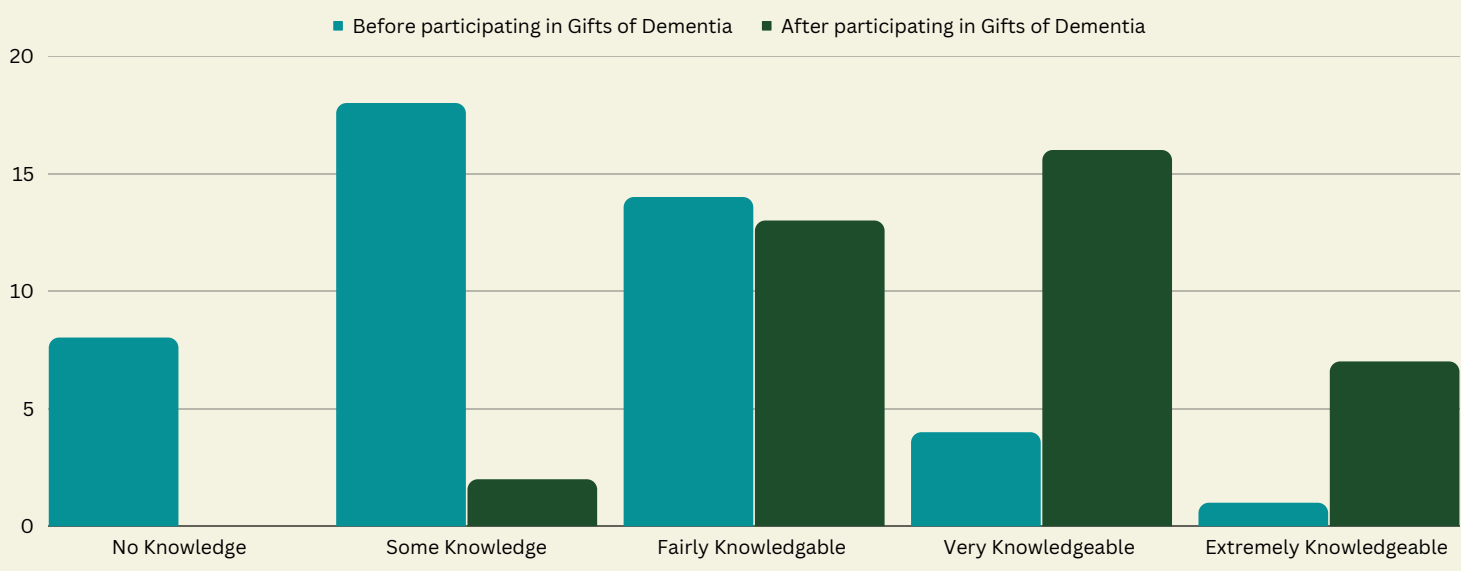
# GIFTS OF DEMENTIA & DAWN METHOD TRAINING

Gifts of Dementia is an educational workshop that helps caregivers understand dementia and how to better care for a person living with dementia. The 2-hour introductory presentation provides education surrounding skills lost and maintained among those with dementia. Providing caregivers with this knowledge creates opportunities for the person living with dementia and caregivers to have a better quality of life.

Rural Initiative funding supported the implementation of Gifts of Dementia in the Eastern Region. Extension partnered with Jill Couch, a licensed Occupational Therapist and Certified DAWN Dementia Specialist, to deliver the program at 6 different sites in Northeast Colorado. Eastern Region FCS Specialists partnered with local hospitals, businesses, and organizations for marketing and sponsorship support. Partners made this program possible and allowed community members to attend at little or no cost, reducing the often-cited financial barriers.

Program participants included professional caregivers from long-term care and assisted living facilities, in-home family caregivers, and Extension professionals.

## Gifts of Dementia participants' change in Dementia-related knowledge:



The DAWN Method Training, an 8-week series for families with loved ones diagnosed with dementia, was also provided in Northeastern Colorado. The DAWN Method is a strength-based approach to dementia care that provides specific tools to meet emotional needs of people living with dementia and empowers families and caregiver to help create a more supportive home caregiving environment. DAWN was offered in a hybrid format with the in-person site in Sterling and broadcast live so others could attend and interact from different communities.

## DAWN Method Training Impacts:

**100%**

of DAWN Method Training participants reported that they are "better able to recognize and meet the emotional needs of people I care for who have dementia."

*"I cannot thank you enough. I had almost no hope at all when I began this class! I believe you have helped me keep from making some major mistakes."*

-DAWN participant

**100%**

of DAWN Method Training participants reported that they "feel empowered to meet their own emotional needs as a caregiver of someone with dementia."

# **NREC COMMUNITY LISTENING SESSIONS**

CSU Health Extension partnered with the Human Development and Family Studies (HDFS) department to implement seven listening sessions with the Northeastern Regional Engagement Center (NREC) in the Fall of 2022. The purpose of the listening sessions was to determine opportunities for collaboration, barriers, and needs surrounding rural health and healthy aging. An HDFS graduate student provided support for the effort and developed a comprehensive report summarizing recommendations.



**Gathering input through focus groups provided the data to support the need for developing an NREC Advisory Committee and a Healthy Aging Strategic Plan. Human Development and Family Studies, NREC, and Extension partnered to successfully submit a Colorado Clinical and Translational Science Institute proposal to implement a pilot study project that will help create capacity-building tools. Total amount awarded: \$7,996.**



# **DEMENTIA COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

HDFS and Extension partnered to conduct a needs assessment related to dementia education in the Northeast Region. With support from an HDFS doctoral student, demographic data on dementia rates were collected for all counties in the NE region and a research summary was developed on existing dementia education programs. This information will support Health Extension in evaluating next steps for dementia programming and training.

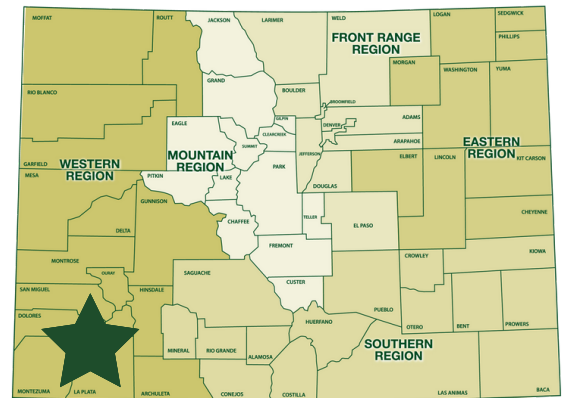




# BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PROGRAM IMPACTS

## MONTEZUMA COUNTY SUICIDE POSTVENTION LISTENING SESSION

Funding from the Rural Initiative supported the implementation of an in-person Montezuma County Suicide Postvention Listening Session. This session brought together community residents, health care providers, non-profit agencies, tribal nations, public health departments, juvenile justice professionals, and agriculture communities from Dolores, Archuleta, La Plata, and Montezuma counties. The group developed a list of community resources and a set of recommendations for how to support the community around suicide in the future.



*"I can tell you that Native American centered training is lacking throughout the field. People need training for how to address the barriers and learn about Native communities and connect--have those conversations. Right now, there is very little or no communication between Tribal Sovereign Nations and our community. We need to promote opportunities to learn about each other at this type of training."*

-Postvention Training Attendee



The findings from this listening session helped to inform the foundation for an Extension Summer Internship project focused on creating a human trauma toolkit for Extension. Additional funding is being sought to support next steps.

# YAMPA VALLEY COFFEE BREAK PROJECT

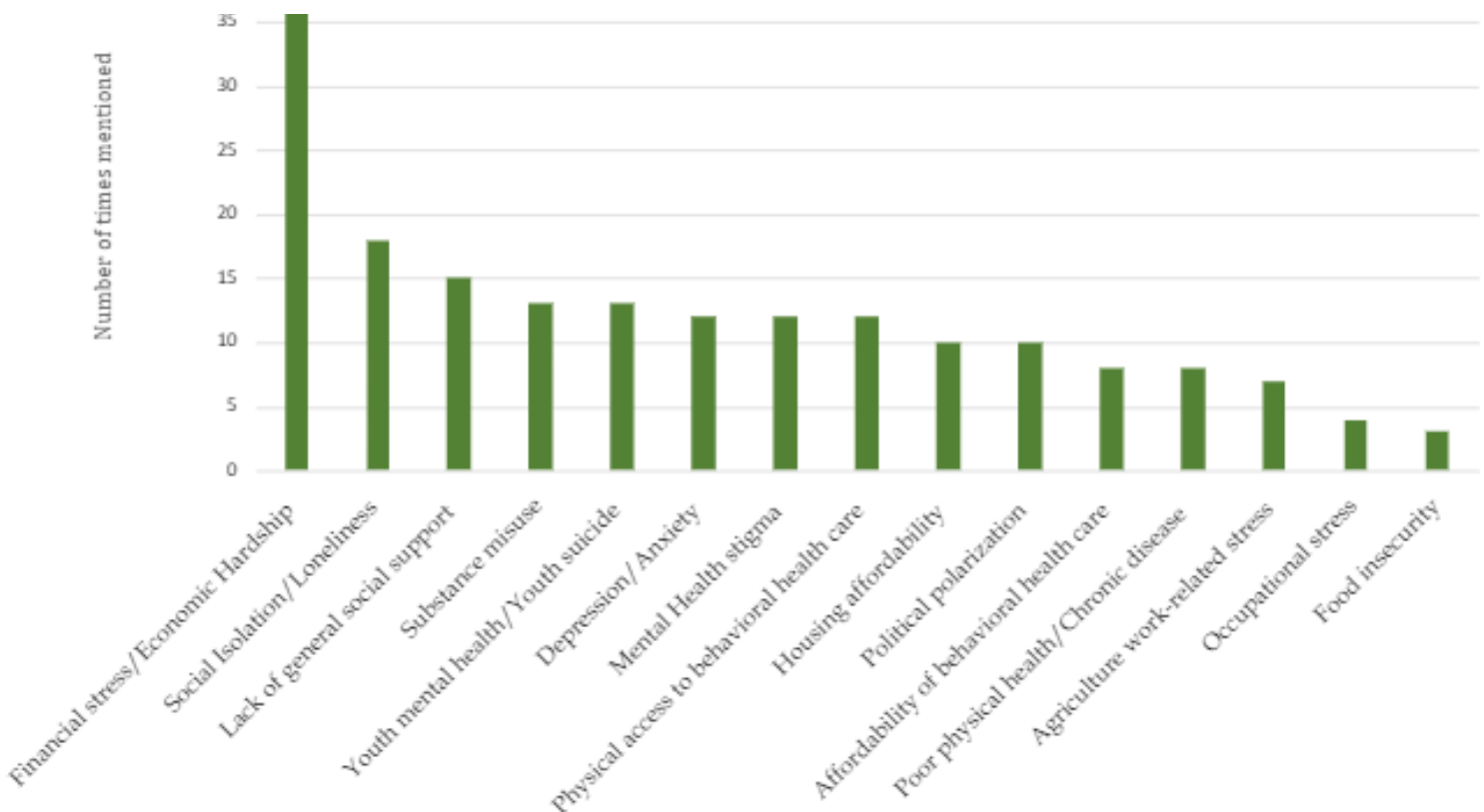
Through funds generated in partnership with Northwest Colorado Health from the Colorado Department of Agriculture, Calandra Lindstadt, Western Regional Health Specialist, supported the implementation of the Coffee Break Project in June 2023. Based on the successful Coffee Break Project in the Southern Region, this program offers weekly opportunities for rural adults to gather and network over a cup of coffee and donuts, providing informal support around mental health and social connection in the Yampa Valley. The Coffee Break Project currently serves an average of 7-10 people per week. This program also provides opportunities for individuals to become COMET trained, which is a peer support mental health crisis aversion model. Seven people have completed the COMET Training thus far.



## BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CAPACITY: OEE WORKFORCE ASSESSMENT

In April 2023, CSU Extension's Rural Health team distributed a survey to all Extension affiliated professionals to gauge community-level behavioral health needs and training interests. Seventy completed responses were received. Survey responses were reviewed and assigned codes to capture the major themes and issues. These data will help inform and drive the expansion of CSU Extension's Behavioral Health initiatives. Among other key questions, respondents reported on the top mental health issues in their communities (learn more in the Additional Resources Section).

### TOP ISSUES IMPACTING MENTAL HEALTH IN COLORADO



# HEALTH PROMOTION PROGRAM IMPACTS

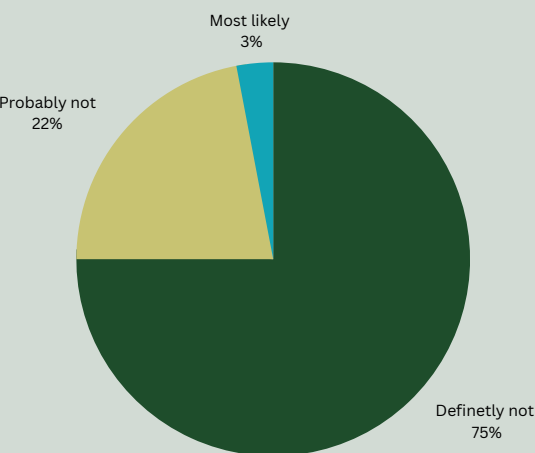
## RURAL HEALTH & SAFETY EDUCATION FAIRS

Funds from the Rural Initiative supported Lincoln County Extension's hosting of two Rural Health and Safety Education Fairs. The "North" Health and Safety Fair was an event catered toward youth from schools primarily within Lincoln and Kit Carson Counties. The "South" Health and Safety Fair was held for families at the La Juanta Primary School.

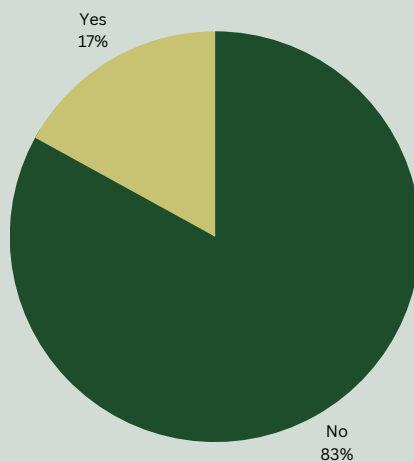
Most rural communities lack reasonable and cost-effective access to many health and safety related screenings and education. The Health and Safety fairs provided the opportunity for youth and families to learn about health and safety education, prevention, and resources. The focus was on providing hands-on activities and valuable take home resources for all to continue engaging in positive health and safety behaviors.

In addition to providing education and resources, Extension Specialists capitalized upon "North" Health and Safety Fair as an opportunity to survey youth regarding various health behaviors. This data is essential to understand the experiences of youth and types of interventions needed to support happy, healthy kids in this region. In total, 83 youth responded to the survey.

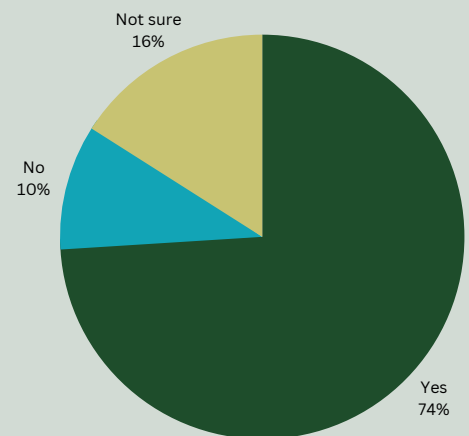
### Highlights from the youth survey responses:



If your friends offered you an electronic vape or tobacco product, would you use it?



During the past 12 months did you ever seriously consider attempting suicide?



If you ever had a serious problem, do you know an adult whom you could talk to or go for help?



*It's too hard to choose my favorite part of the event! I loved the hands-on activities vs. hand-outs only! Great job and very informative!*

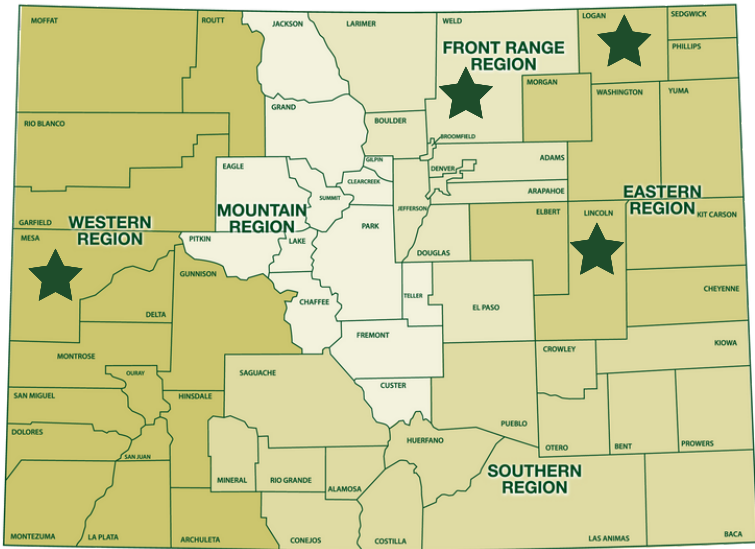
-Adult Health Fair Attendee

# RURAL SAFETY AND PPE WORKSHOPS

Rural Initiative funds helped to support the implementation of four Rural Safety and PPE Workshops along with the distribution of PPE resource kits, which included:

- Safety glasses
- N95 respirator
- Gloves
- Push-in earplugs
- High visibility vest
- Roll-down earplugs
- Faucet grip

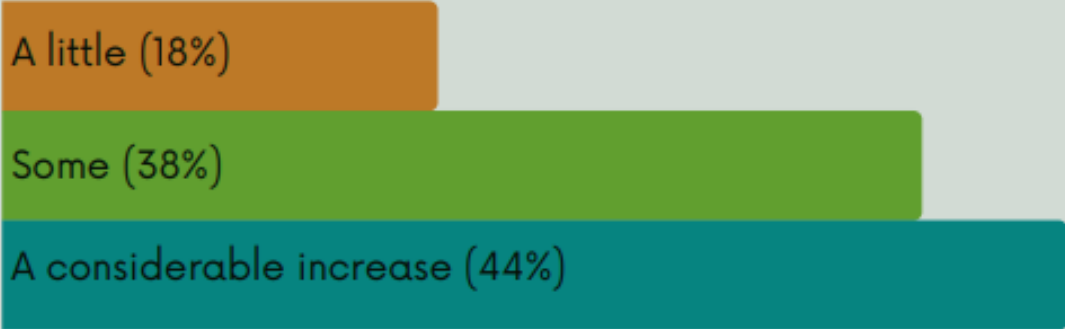
Workshops took place in Pierce, Limon, Grand Junction, and Sterling, where a total of 53 participants received safety education and tools. The workshops were geared toward agricultural producers and their families (including youth), providers/businesses that interact with agricultural producers, medical personnel, educators/Extension personnel, and others who were interested. The goal was to engage with agricultural producers and providers on Safety and Personal Protective Equipment as safety education is a critical component of reducing injuries, preventing deaths, ensuring economic stability at all levels, lowering health care costs, and providing access to resources in rural areas.



Funding for this project provided critical take-home safety items and resources in order to decrease barriers for individuals to enact behavior change. The partnership between CSU Extension, High Plains Intermountain Center for Agricultural Health and Safety (HICHAS), and AgrAbility provided the opportunity for training and cross-awareness of programs in our state and made the workshops feasible, and enjoyable for all!

## All attendees gained knowledge!

How much did the workshop increase your knowledge?



**[See the full Rural Safety & PPE Workshop Evaluation Report!](#)**

# A HEALTHIER WEIGH & DINING WITH DIABETES

Rural Initiative dollars supported the expansion of *A Healthier Weigh* and *Dining with Diabetes* programs through the purchase of the InBody 270 Body Composition Analyzer. The InBody machine is portable and therefore enhanced program accessibility as County Specialists were able to bring programs to Eastern and Southern Region communities rather than expecting community members to travel to Extension office locations. Additionally, having reliable access to InBody increased opportunities for program outcome and impact evaluation. Jaci Wagner, FCS Specialist in Logan County, noted; "By having this machine, I will be able to generate more funding as people are excited to join programs with this technology." Learn about some of the outcomes from Eastern Region counties that implemented *A Healthier Weigh* below:

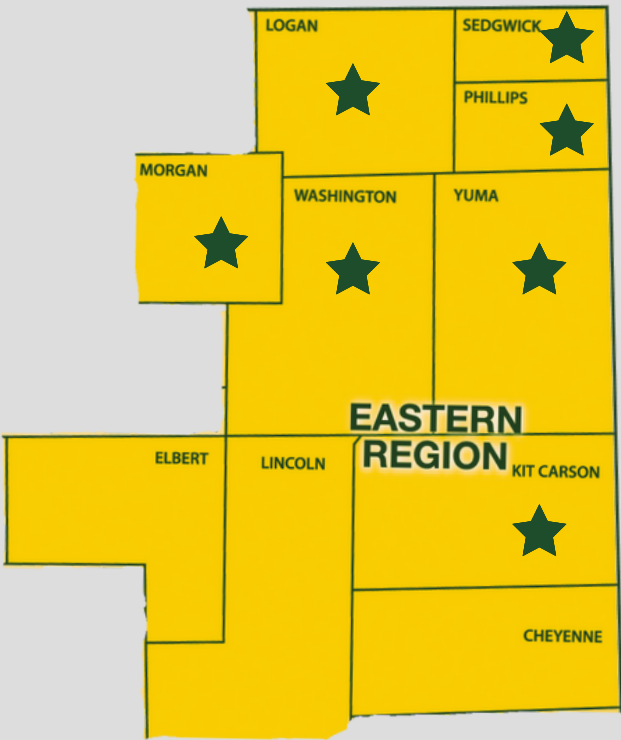
**197**  
"A Healthier Weigh"  
participants region-wide

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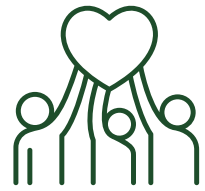
**875**  
total pounds were lost  
among participants

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**259**  
total inches were lost  
among participants



The map shows the following counties with stars: Logan, Sedgwick, Phillips, Morgan, Washington, Yuma, Elbert, Lincoln, Kit Carson, and Cheyenne. The text "EASTERN REGION" is centered on the map.

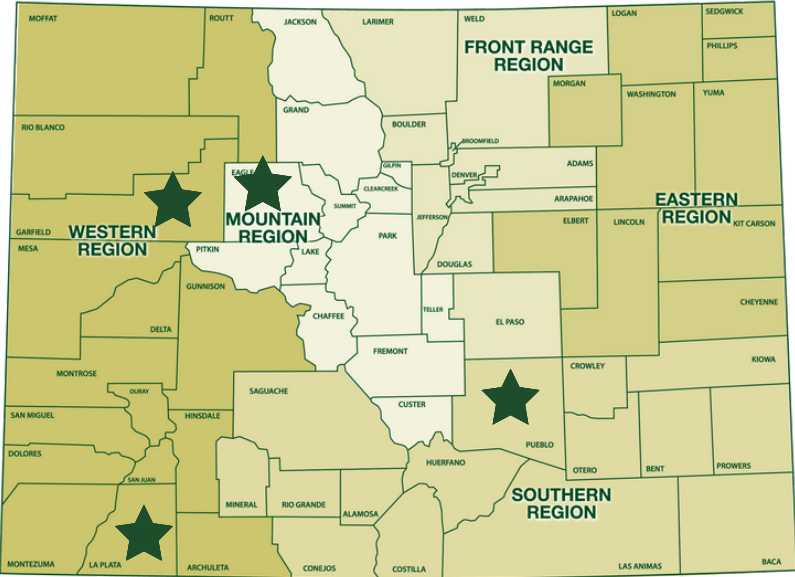


“  
*My doctor said I couldn't have my knee replacement surgery until I got stronger and would be able to recover from it. I went to the pool and walked in the water 4-5 times a week and was able to build muscle so I was strong enough to have surgery and lost weight in the process. I could take the results of the InBody and show my doctor my numbers change!*

“  
*I can't wait to do it again next year-- but with friends and family for accountability, too!*  
”

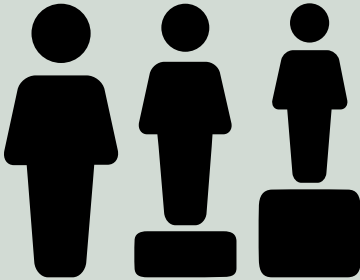
# GARDEN TO KITCHEN

Garden to Kitchen is a program designed for families to participate together to learn about growing food and preparing healthy meals with food from their own gardens. Funding from the Rural Initiative supported the development of culturally adapted and translated educational materials and the implementation of Garden to Kitchen in the Mountain, Southern, and Western Regions. Not only does this program teach practical nutrition-related skills, but it offers opportunities for families to connect in a fun, educational environment. By the end of the program, participants were able to take home the supplies necessary to start growing their own vegetables at home and ingredients for a healthy meal! Future sessions are being planned following participants' strong interest in attending.



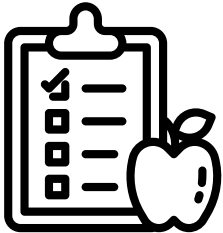
## Prioritizing Health Equity

Funding to support the development of Spanish and culturally-relevant outreach materials and videos was critical to engage Hispanic/Latino populations throughout the state. In Eagle County, all 43 participants of Garden to Kitchen were Spanish-speaking and in La Plata County, all 29 participants identified as Latino or Hispanic. The programs were delivered in Spanish, with interpretation. Additionally, community-based organizations that frequently serve these populations helped to recruit program participants and provided resources for implementation.



## BEING HEALTHY IS FUN AND COOL

In response to an expressed need by FCS and 4-H Specialists for youth nutrition education curriculum, Rural Initiative funding supported Food Science and Human Nutrition (FSHN) graduate student work for the development of *Being Healthy is Fun and Cool* modules that will be implemented across the state.



# EAT WELL/COMER BIEN

Rural Initiative dollars supported two workshops of the pilot program *Eat Well/Comer Bien in the Mountain Region* where 25 participants learned how to prepare nutritious food on a budget. *Eat Well/Comer Bien* differs from other nutrition programs as it is a one-time lesson that is completed in 1.5 hours. This helps reduce time-related barriers, while still teaching applicable nutrition skills. In collaboration with The Community Market, this pilot program served low- and middle-income families in Eagle County, with a majority of participants identifying as Latino. Plans are being developed to offer this program seasonally and expand it to other locations within the Mountain Region.



# MASTER FOOD SAFETY ADVISOR TRAINING

Funds from the Rural Initiative supported the provision of a *Master Food Safety Advisor (MFSA)* training for recently hired FCS County Specialists. The five FCS Specialists who completed the training had little to no background in food preservation. FCS Specialists learned about several boiling water bath and pressure canning products, dehydration, and fermentation techniques. Ensuring that all FCS Specialists have the proper training and equipment for this program increases the opportunity for Extension to scale programs at a state-level, which will lead to improved overall sustainability.



# WE THANK OUR PARTNERS

A special thanks to the CSU Board of Governors for their generous investment in CSU Extension to improve rural health across Colorado.



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## Northeast Regional Engagement Center



The Colorado Health Foundation™



Suicide Awareness for Everyone





# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Thank you for taking the time to learn about the work and trajectory of CSU Health Extension. Several reports and supporting materials were referenced throughout this report, including:

- Montezuma County Suicide Postvention Listening Session Summary Report
- NREC Community Listening Session Executive Summary Report
- OEE Behavioral Health Readiness Survey Summary Report
- Rural Safety and PPE Workshop Evaluation Report

Please reach out to Natalie Bachmeier ([natalie.bachmeier@colostate.edu](mailto:natalie.bachmeier@colostate.edu)) to receive a copy of these documents or if you have additional questions.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Rural Initiative–Improved Health Goal Lead, Sue Schneider  
Program Evaluation and Report Design, Natalie Bachmeier

**There are many people that played an integral role in the work reflected in this report. We would like to recognize all collaborators who brought these projects to fruition including CSU Extension Regional and County Specialists, Northeast Regional Engagement Center staff, Colorado State University faculty and students, community partners and volunteers across the state, and so many more. We are grateful for your dedication to the health and well-being of all Coloradans.**

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